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ABSTRACT

A failure in communication between Anglo American, American Indian, and Mexican American communities exists because of the inadequate reporting of the events that occur within each of these groups. This speech outlines several basic ways in which communication can eventually be improved. First, it emphasizes that educators must recognize and incorporate Spanish American history into the history of New Mexico and the Southwest, allowing for the complexity of this culture. The speech states that the dominant Anglo American group must develop a respect for the customs, culture, and language of the American Indian and the Mexican American and, at the same time, acknowledge the contributions of these cultures to the rich heritage of the Southwest. A need exists on all sides, the speech concludes, to recognize distinct value systems; conflicts occur because attitudes toward religion and government differ radically. (MAI)

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Anglo Americans, Mexican Americans, American Indians

Can They Communicate?

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The Southwest, the area of discussion, is in many ways the oldest and yet the youngest region in the United States. It is the oldest in that it experienced the first European settlements in what is now the United States, as the Spanish moved north of the Rio Grande River to settle in New Mexico. It was in the Southwest that Indian tribes and pueblos had first to cope with European conquest, aggression, and settlement. It should never be forgotten, as frequently it is, that the Southwest experienced several centuries of Spanish sovereignty and Mexican rule before it became part of the United States.

While yet the oldest, the Southwest is also the youngest section of the nation. Except for Alaska, it was the last mainland acquisition of the United States. Almost the entire history of the American Southwest can be encapsulated into two life spans. I have personally known men who had seen the sun glint on Commanche lances and heard the proverbial Apache bullet. Indeed, the entire modernization and Americanization of the Southwest, including the expansion of the regional railroad network, the development of irrigation systems, the monstrous population growth, and uncontrolled urbanization has taken place since the 1900's.

Although superficially Americanized, the Southwest is inhabited by three vigorous cultural and ethnic groupings, the Anglo American, the American Indian and the Mexican American. Each of these is composed of numerous subgroupings. Among the Anglo Americans may be found Mormon rural and urban communities; Mennonite farm villages; cattle and sheep counties struggling to maintain older American frontier values; irrigated farming oases; dead, dying, and thriving mining and smelting towns; newly established industrial centers, rapidly growing metropolitan cities; stagnant rural marketing communities, retirement and recreational suburbs and villages; literary, artistic, scientific and criminal colonies; hippie communes; religious and immigrant groups from many

parts of the world, and numerous military installations.

Incrusted among the Anglo Americans are Asian American farmers, businessmen, and professionals in the process of acculturation and assimilation into Anglo American society. The substantial Black population that emerged in the Southwest during and after World War II, although still struggling to free themselves from the entangling network of discrimination and segregation, are essentially Anglo American in culture and language.

The rapidly growing American Indian or Native American population is also extremely diverse in culture. Each Indian tribe or pueblo is an independent cultural entity. The cultural differences between them may be as great as those between Anglo America, Russia, China, or Japan. Even among the pueblos that share many basic cultural characteristics, cultural and linguistic differences exist. These differences and dying memories of most tribal and pueblo hostilities still inhibit efforts to create political coalitions between Southwestern Indian tribes and pueblos. The failure of Anglo Americans to comprehend these cultural differences still handicaps communication between Anglo American professionals, businessmen, government agencies and local American Indians.

Another problem in communication between the Indians themselves as well as with Anglo Americans and Mexican Americans is the existence of factionalism within the tribes and pueblos. The political life of some tribes and pueblos is bedeviled by the emergence of so called progressive and conservative factions. The progressives tend to be Indians, often of mixed blood, who have opted for acculturation into Anglo American society. They abandon the use of tribal languages, join Christian denominations, and seldom participate in native Indian religious ceremonies. The conservatives on the other hand are Indians, often more full blooded, who use Indian languages, maintain modified forms of traditional tribal and pueblo traditional culture, and actively participate in

native religious ceremonies and are far less active in tribal, local, state and national political systems. The exact nature and seriousness of the progressive-conservative factionalism varies from tribe to tribe. In general, the progressives have had the full support of private and public Anglo-Americans, while conservatives have been, until very recently, repressed and looked down upon. In view of the tremendous pressures exerted, it is surprising that Indian languages and modified cultural patterns have survived.

In the past few years, social and political pressures on the conservatives have slackened. The conservatives have been favored by the changing American cultural spirit of the times with its emphasis upon cultural pluralism, civil rights, and a changing relationship with nature. The rise of numerous at times militant and often conflicting Indian protest and civil rights movements drawing spiritual nourishment from traditional Indian cultures and religions, the questioning Anglo American cultural values by groups of Anglo Americans, the tarnishing of the acculturational model all favor the traditional Indian elements. But one must still confess that perhaps poverty and physical isolation have done more to protect Indian languages and cultural traditions than anything else.

One can expect a growing deterioration of local Anglo American, even Mexican American and Indian relationships in the Southwest. The Indian thrust toward political and cultural autonomy, their demands of full participation and partial control of all government and private agencies that effect their lives, their expanding political and judicial activities, their demand that treaty rights be fulfilled all conflict with local Anglo American values and with local and state autonomy. Local Anglo Americans are often shocked by the growing tendency of the Federal Government to support Indian causes.

Much of the growing Anglo American bewilderment toward the changing Indian is a product of the almost total failure of the mass-media. Few Anglo American or Mexican American reporters possess the cultural knowledge, the background

information, and personal contacts necessary to accurately interpret events and movements among the Southwestern Indians. Social scientists such as anthropologists and sociologists who might be of assistance have learned from sad experience that it is dangerous to their tenure to become involved with minority movements, to point out areas of rising tension and strain, or to become personally involved in any way. It is much safer to confine one's activities to professional journals and to papers read in the sanctity of professional associations. The result of this failure of communication may be the continued increase in tensions, sporadic violence, and failure of well-meant, but poorly designed, local and government programs designed to reduce tensions and to improve economic and social conditions among both Indians and their Mexican American and Anglo American neighbors.

The Mexican Americans,once referred to as the silent minority in the Southwest, also contains many quite diverse cultural subgroupings that, although sharing many basic core values, do differ culturally, economically, and socially from each other. This cultural diversity is reflected by the fact that no term or name has yet emerged acceptable to all subgroupings. Chicano, Mexican American, Spanish American, Latin American, Hispano-American or Hispanos, and Mexican are all used somewhere in the Southwest, and all are rejected by substantial elements among the Mexican Americans. Anglo Americans working among Mexican Americans must be conscious of the local definition of such names that reflect the changing sense of identity among Mexican American subgroupings. The careless use of names may antagonize Mexican Americans.

Mexican Americans no longer are rural sheepherders, cowboys, rural village farmers, or migrant farm workers. Many still work in these occupations, but the majority today are skilled, white collar, and professional workers residing in the major metropolitan centers of the nation. Few Anglo Americans are aware of the immense cultural, economic, and social changes that have taken place among the Mexicans since World War II. Mexican Americans are no longer confined

to the Southwest, but are now found throughout the nation. Unfortunately, these changes tend to be masked by the continued heavy immigration of legal and illegal Mexican immigrants that capture the attention of Anglo American mass media who seldom pay attention to the changing evolving Mexican American community.

Mexican American civil rights and protest organizations, judicial decisions, and government programs as well as changing Anglo American attitudes have brought about significant improvements in the political, economic, and cultural position of the Mexican American population of the Southwest. Unfortunately, much of the economic progress is being eroded by poorly controlled inflation recession, and high rates of unemployment. Although mass media reporting on Mexican American affairs has improved over the years, unfortunate inadequacies still exist. For example, few Anglo American reporters or government officals are aware of Mexican American history, of the numerous subgroupings, or of the evolving social class structure, regional differences, and changing Mexican American conceptions and aspirations. A dangerous over-simplicity exists.

The fundamental reason for the incredible ignorance of Anglo Americans about Mexican American history is the scholarly failure of Anglo American historians except for Bancroft to incorporate Mexican-American or American-Indian historical traditions in their historical treatments of Southwestern history. It is not commonly realized that three historical traditions exist in the Southwest. There is the Anglo American tradition that has found embalmment in the written histories of the region. The Mexican American historical tradition is just now entering the historical literature while that of the American Indians of the Southwest still remains to be recorded. As a result, historical studies of the Southwest are, at best, often incomplete, and, at worst, inaccurate.

The historical treatment of the Spanish Americans of northern New Mexico presents many excellent case studies of the historical bias of many Anglo American historians. For example, in 1847, the rural Spanish American inhabitants of

northern New Mexico rose against the poorly behaved Anglo American army of occupation. Large numbers of village men were mobilized over a large area. Battles were fought against American troops, and 15 Spanish Americans were executed for their part in the rebellion against a country to whom they owed no allegiance. Even today, almost nothing is known about the leaders of the revolt, how the movement was organized, and what role, if any, did Mexican leaders play. Many much smaller Spanish American protests and uprisings have occurred in New Mexican history such as the White Cap movement in San Miquel County in the 1880's and 1890's. None of them have found a comprehensive historian.

Very few Anglo Americans in New Mexico or outside the state are aware because of the inadequacies of Anglo American historians and of the mass media of the historic causes of the chronic smouldering unrest of the Spanish American people of northern New Mexico. Few even today are aware of the unwise policies of some federal agencies responsible for the militancy of the local Spanish American rural people or of the incredible activities of high state officials that were responsible for the Alianza attack on the courthouse at Tierra Amarilla in 1966. It is a measure of Spanish American desperation that they, usually quite suspicious of all outsiders, were willing to accept as a leader a Texan-born Mexican American. To my knowledge, no one has meditated on this fact.

Unless communication is improved between the rural Spanish American village people of northern New Mexico and Anglo Americans, especially those in decision making positions, other protest organizations, other militant episodes, and other militant leaders will appear again. The Alianza Federal de Mercedes was but the most recent protest leader. The cycle has not ended. Unless efforts are made to treat the basic causes of rural Spanish American unrest rather than its symptoms as most government programs did and are doing, the cycle will turn again.

I would now like to discuss with you some of the steps that ought to be taken to improve communications between the Spanish Americans as an example of Southwestern minorities and the dominant Anglo American grouping. The first and perhaps one of the most important steps is to rescue Spanish American history from oblivion. Spanish Americans have played most important, but unrecognized, roles in the political, economic, cultural, and military history of New Mexico. These contributions ought to be recognized and incorporated into New Mexican and Southwestern history.

Second, the right of the Spanish Americans to maintain their cultural traditions and their language should be respected and honored. Both should become part of the cultural heritage of the state. It might be pointed out that the cultural interaction between Anglo American, Spanish American, and American Indian in New Mexico is responsible for the fact that in art and literature New Mexico is one of the richer states. Ironically, the Anglo American educational, economic, and political establishment in New Mexico has struggled to eradicate both Indian American and Spanish American cultures and languages; the very cultures and languages that have enriched New Mexico.

Anglo Americans seldom realize that the Mexican American inhabitants of the Southwest are the submerged northern fringe of Spanish-speaking Latin America. Because of the tortilla curtain along the American-Mexican border, very few Mexican Americans or Anglo Americans have any real knowledge of Mexican and other Latin American art, philosophy, history, literature, or scholarly writing. If the tortilla curtain were weakened enough to permit the free flow of cultural influences from Latin America, the Southwest might witness the evolution of a regional culture drawing from the contributions of diverse Southwestern ethnic groups as well as from Latin America and Anglo America that might well be richer than that of many other regions in the United States.

Third, effective communication cannot develop between the three major ethnic groups of the Southwest until the dominant Anglo Americans develop the

ability to respect and honor the cultural contributions of the American Indian and Mexican American. The latter are fully aware of the unjustified Anglo American assumptions of superiority and lack of respect. The lack of respect and the cultural assumptions are strongly resented. Unfortunately, many upwardly mobile individuals among minority groups acquire Anglo American attitudes toward their own people that produce cultural marginality and damaged personal and group identity. Anglo American attitudes cannot be changed until Anglo Americans of the younger generations are made familiar with the cultural contributions and history of the Mexican Americans and American Indians.

Fourth, steps ought to be taken by both state and federal governments to rehabilitate the economic life of Northern New Mexico, one of the most seriously depressed regions in the country. Programs adopted should involve the purchase and return of lands once belonging to the Spanish Americans; development of an adequate road network; improvement of local school systems; vocational training; adequate survey of soil, water, timber, and mineral resources; the provision of capital to local Spanish American entrepreneurs; credit unions; agricultural experiment stations; rehabilitation of irrigation systems and protection of water rights; and tax incentives to attract industry. Socio-economic conditions in northern New Mexico are an economic abscess that weakens the economic strength of the entire Southwest.

And finally, communication between Mexican American and Anglo Americans is severely blocked by Anglo American failure to realize the Mexican Americans and Anglo Americans possess distinctive value systems. Persons working with members of the major minority groups in the Southwest should possess some knowledge of the diverse Southwestern value systems. But the problem of values is far more complex than this simple truism. Almost all American Indians and Mexican Americans have been exposed to Anglo American values. Many of them have accepted Anglo American values on a superficial level without being aware

that they are still motivated on deeper emotional levels by native values.

Unfortunately, many Mexican Americans and American Indians live in a world of value confusion and value conflicts. They do not fully comprehend either their own value systems nor those of the Anglo Americans and thus are unable to live by either. They became marginal people who often express their frustration in alcohol, drugs, crime, and violence. Of course, not all alcoholics, drug addicts, or criminals suffer from value conflicts.

Many Mexican Americans, American Indians, and even some Anglo Americans learn to compartmentalize value systems. They learn to behave by the value system of the people they may be interacting with. And a very large number of Mexican Americans and American Indians adopt Anglo values in some areas of their lives and reject them in other areas. To balance the equation, many Anglo Americans knowingly or unknowingly adopt Mexican American or American Indian values. I suspect that psycho-cultural analyses of Anglo American behavior in the Southwest might reveal the unsuspecting presence of lurking American Indian or Mexican American values. Thus, the concept and associated values of Machismo are as much a part of the Anglo American value system of Texas and New Mexico as they are of the Mexican Americans.

The complexity and perplexity of Southwestern value systems may create difficult problems for those who have to work with various Southwestern groups. It is most important to realize that value systems vary from one Indian tribe or pueblo to another. Among the Mexican Americans, the various subgroupings are marked by value differences. And certainly, similar differences also exist among Anglo American subgroupings. This means that Southwestern professionals, teachers, social workers, government and private employees and others that may interact with diverse ethnic groups should be especially avoid stereotyping people as Indians, Mexican Americans, or Anglo Americans. It would help if perhaps schools and universities might provide classes comparing current value systems, their mixtures, and the expected behavior. If this were done, communi-

cation networks in the Southwest would be improved.

I would like to devote the rest of my presentation to a discussion of certain value conflicts between Spanish Americans and Anglo Americans in New Mexico. One of the most important value conflicts originates in differential attitudes toward the land. Very few Anglo Americans comprehend the almost mystical attachment that large numbers of rural Spanish-American village people have to their lands. The land is not a commodity, as it is among Anglo Americans, to be used and abused for material gains. Land among the Spanish Americans is defined almost in mystical terms as the foundation of life. Ideally the land should never be sold but handed down from one generation to another. The land once held by a village is an organic part of the village and should never be alienated from the village. The fact that most of the village common lands today have passed into the hands of Anglo Americans is defined as a moral wrong, a moral crime that can never be accepted over the generations.

The Anglo American inhabitants of the Southwest by and large are a secularized people who have succeeded in confining religion to occasional Church attendance. Very little sense of mysticism, of sacredness, of the importance of sacrifice, and of the uncertainty of life has survived among them. On the other hand, the entire moral and physical world of the rural Spanish American people of northern New Mexico is filled with supernatural meaning. These people are mystical in their attitudes toward life. Spanish Americans respond far more to leaders who can draw upon religious and mystical values than they do to leaders who emphasize only material gains. Anglo Americans were and are baffled by leaders such as Reies Tijerina, who talk about ultimate justice, about redemption, about suffering for one's sins, and that someday, the Lord will send a Messiah to lead the people from their valley of death and exploitation. Anglo Americans are baffled, confused, and irritated by such language.

Attitudes toward government also differ profoundly. Spanish Americans tend to be profoundly cynical and hostile toward all government agencies and all

government personnel. It is doubtful that there exists in the United States a people more profoundly cynical towards the American system of government than the Spanish Americans. For over a hundred years, most of the contacts between the Spanish Americans and local, state, and national governments have been negative. The government takes and never delivers. Promises are made and promptly forgotten. Many government programs in New Mexico, such as the establishment of National Forests, the building of dams and formation of irrigation projects, and the creation of conservancy or flood control districts have benefitted the Anglo American population at the direct expense of the Spanish Americans. Thus, the formation of the Rio Grande Conservancy District around Albuquerque cost over 7,000 Spanish American farmers their land holdings. It is incredibly difficult for any rural Spanish American in northern New Mexico to ever trust any government official or to believe that any government agency might be interested in his welfare. As a matter of fact, very few have.

Dignidad, translated as dignity, is another fundamental Spanish American value. It means that every individual whatever his station is life has the right to be treated with respect and consideration just because he is a human being. Face is as important among the Spanish Americans as it is said to have been in ancient China. A Spanish American who is scolded, cursed or humiliated, or mistreated by other people, will either withdraw completely from all contacts with the individual or agency responsible, or may be forced to act violently. Furthermore,every relative and friend will feel equally offended. Any Anglo American teacher, social worker, government official, or whatever who humiliates a Spanish American, should be removed from all contact with them.

Competition, individualism, achievement, and success are fundamental Anglo American values. Anglo children are harried by admonitions to keep up with others in their educational, intellectual, social and personal development. They are taught that through hard work and individual effort expressed through competition, success as measured by wealth, high social position, prestige, and power

will be theirs. Winners gain applause, and losers sink back into obscurity.

To the Spanish Americans, Anglo Americans are cold, hard, materialistic, mechanistic, and devoid of compassion. Spanish Americans simply will not compete if it means the humiliation of friends. They find it impossible to accept the idea that one's job is the most important role in life. To them, intimate friendships, family relationships, responsibilities to dependents, and cultivation of an enjoyable life style are just as important as a successful career.

The average Anglo American is a natural optimist who believes that the future will inevitably be better than the past. He is oriented toward change, which he defines as progress and progress is sacred. If problems exist, they can all be solved by science. Every problem has a solution and man, in time, will find it. The Spanish American, on the other hand, is a cautious pessimistic optimist. He does not quite trust either the universe of his fellow men. Nature and the future are somewhat inscrutable, and one can never be sure of the future. His history has taught him that the future may be worse than the present. Therefore, the present should be enjoyed fully. When and if the difficult days come, man must do what he can, resign himself to what he cannot overcome, and endure until the arrival of better times. The Spanish Americans endure very well. Endurance, as a matter of fact, is a weapon.

The last value that we have time to discuss is personalism. This is rather difficult to define in English. Anglos tend to react formally, objectively, and impersonally to people encountered during their working day. Anglo Americans tend to categorize people in terms of their social position, their occupation, their wealth, and their race or ethnic group. Anglo American professionals and businessmen like to be neat, tidy, precise, and love flow charts and tables of organizations.

Spanish Americans, as a result, are the despair of Anglo Americans. No human relationship is acceptable among them unless it is warm, friendly, intimate, and personal. They find it impossible to stay within the confines of any

chart outlining responsibilities and lines of communication. The objective impersonal behavior of Anglo Americans is regarded as rude and uncivilized.

In closing, I would like to thank Dr. Pace for the opportunity that he has given me to be present with you. In closing, I would like to make the following comments about the Spanish American people with whom I have worked so intimately for ten years.

The Spanish American people are a very kind, gentle, stoical and unassuming people. Even though they have suffered much, they are for the most part free of hatred and animosity. They are a deeply compassionate people, although they have received little compassion from others. I have never known them to turn their backs on those who were hungry or who needed assistance. A deeply religious people, they have a strong respect for the environment and for human life. Few Spanish American names are found on the long list of criminals, so attractive to Anglo Americans, who terrorized the Southwest during the last half of the 19th Century. The Spanish Americans are a fun-loving, hospitable people, with an ingrained, deeply ironic sense of humor. They possess great gifts of friendship and of love. A hardy and vigorous people, they have proven their loyalty to this country that has given them so few reasons for loyalty on a hundred battlefields, ranging from the Civil War to the Vietnam War. Living in Utah, I miss them very much.